

second molar must have dropped out. The complete destruction of the alveolus of the second molar suggests that the wound must have been caused in the region of the second molar and not at the third molar as is suggested by the present position of the quill, since, the inflammatory process spreads centrifugally from the focus of infection.

'Suppurative osteitis is an extremely painful condition. The bone becomes weak and may fracture even by slight force. This explains the peculiar food habit of the tiger of devouring the soft parts alone of its prey.'—EDS.]

## 2. A MUSK SHREW ATTACKING A SNAKE

The common musk shrew, *Suncus murinus*, is responsible for destroying a great many creatures that are harmful to mankind like cockroaches and other insect pests. It is known to feed upon a scorpion and even to attack a large frog (Blanford, W. T., 1888, THE FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA MAMMALIA: 236-237). The author has not come across any record of the shrew attacking a snake.

In the last part of June 1957, one evening, a musk shrew was discovered by me dragging a keelback (*Natrix stollata*) into my house. The snake was a little under 1½ feet long; its head was badly damaged and the snake appeared to have been freshly killed. Apparently the shrew had killed it.

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[The normal food of the musk shrew consists of cockroaches and other insects, but it is known to kill and eat bull-frogs [Wasey, G. K., JBNHS 10 (2): 330-331], toads [Prall, S.E., ibid. 13 (4): 669-700], guinea pig sucklings [Bannerman, W.B., ibid. 16 (4): 751-752]. It also eats vegetable matter such as roots (bulbs) of the 'bimli' grass and coconut pulp [Millard, W. S., ibid. 27 (1): 164]. Sterndale (MAMMALIA OF INDIA: 84) mentions bread and even scorpions as forming part of its diet. It is said to eat rice and grain too, but opinion seems to differ on this point.

—Although in this case the evidence of killing the snake is merely presumptive, it is an interesting record. We can trace no previous mention of a snake in the varied dietary of the musk shrew.—EDS.]